

THE NET ACADEMY PROJECT

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THE REASON

Today we look back at an about 500 year old tradition of entrusting our knowledge to the print media and disseminating it with books and newspapers. Compared with that experience, the alternative of representing information with electronic means seems to be but a short adventure. All the same, in less than ten years the development of information technology has led to a point where our knowledge literally explodes into the new media (Internet). Now we face the problem how to find what we've been looking for in the ocean of information offers. As, in the past, ever growing libraries had to learn how to organise their contents for their medium, we must strive today to organise the contents of the rapidly developing new media as well. A first step was made with Internet search services as Alta Vista, Yahoo, Excite and the like. But we need more sophisticated buildings to alter the now globally spilled information into a well organised and intelligible architecture for our knowledge.

THE VISION

The newly founded Institute of Media and Communication Management (MCM) at the University of St. Gallen is these days implementing a Net Academy on the World Wide Web (<http://www-mcm.unisg.ch>), which offers a well organised logic to manage the specific knowledge of different research areas (<http://www.netacademy.org>). The vision is to offer an open structure and management concept for virtually every research field in search of a intelli-

gible organisation of its contents. As a university offers infrastructures and management for many faculties of different research interests, the Net Academy provides the electronic architecture and a management platform for all who want to become Internet "faculties", for all who want to take advantage from the Net Academy infrastructure without, of course, yielding any claims or titles of their own.

The basic idea of the Net Academy concept consists in the assumption, that there can be found a common logical structure for the management of most of the research fields. This structure shows three

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spheres, first a core section with a vocabulary specific for the research field of type X, with the according definitions and accredited theories. Second, there is a sort of incubation section, where the state of the art regarding the research of type X is evolving, i.e. there you find the new publications, the reviewing procedures, discussions, and a database informing about the partaking agents (authors, reviewers, editors...) and their actions. The third section takes hold of facts and figures exemplifying the ongoing of the other two spheres, as well as of the necessary link collections.

By providing such a structure, easy to understand and to use, offering it to whom it may concern, the Net Academy wants to contribute to the above mentioned objective of providing a well organised and intelligible architecture for the knowledge of the world which is now being transferred into the new media.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Net Academy will open up with a "faculty" on Business Media, where a special focus lies on Electronic Markets (hitherto <http://www-iwi.unisg.ch/cc/em>), and with a "faculty" on Knowledge Media, where the field of interest lies with the question of representation, of information and its semantics and inference mechanisms (hitherto <http://www-iwi.unisg.ch/cc/ekm>).

For newcomers, the Net Academy will offer a competence centre assisting to develop their own "faculty" profile and assisting to characterise their attributes of research interest. The Net Academy also will provide support for the necessary software.